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THE BAPTIST

Record

JOURNAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION

Baptist ministering to Jonesboro shooters

ALEXANDER, Ark. (ABP) — Much has been written recently about ministry to victims, families, and communities in the wake of a seeming epidemic of youth violence.

Greg Kirksey, recently re-elected as president of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, faces the unusual opportunity and challenge of reaching out to perpetrators.

Kirksey, a former pastor, began serving in August as director of Covenant Connections at Arkansas' Alexander Youth Services Center, a state juvenile-detention center.

He describes Covenant Connections as a national pilot project "between the juvenile-detention facility and Boys and Girls Club of America to bring the community and the corrections effort into partnership."

Ten days after he started working at the facility, the two youngsters convicted of killing four fellow students and a teacher earlier this year in Jonesboro, Ark., were transferred to Alexander.

Describing Mitchell Johnson, 13, and Andrew Golden, 11, as "two of the most notorious killers in the history of this state," Kirksey said their

actions "have left scars on Jonesboro that will last for a lifetime."

Detailing some of his ministry experiences during his state-convention presidential address in November,

Kirksey said former Department of Youth Services Director Paul Doramus asked if he would consider serving as "those two Jonesboro boys' pastor."

"I choked with emotion, because somehow I knew in the back of my mind that was why I was there," said Kirksey, who also is a volunteer chaplain in the facility's serious-offenders unit.

Emphasizing that "I don't want to minimize the pain or hurt in any way that they have inflicted upon that community," Kirksey added, "I don't look at Mitchell or Andrew as monsters. Jesus was not willing that any should perish."

In his first meeting with Mitchell Johnson, Kirksey was introduced as a Baptist pastor

who had recently joined the staff. He said Johnson's immediate response was: "You are the answer to my prayer."

"I said, 'Mitchell, what do you mean by that?' He said, 'When I came, I asked if there was a preacher or a chaplain that I could talk to and they said we didn't have one. So I started praying that God would send somebody that I could talk to about him and you are the answer to my prayer.'"

Reflecting on that experience, Kirksey asked: "Who is going to reach out to a love-starved guy like Mitchell if not the Christian community? Where does he turn?"

"Where does he go if he repents? Is there any hope or is he damned forever? Has he committed the unpardonable sin?"

"Do we throw him in the dumpster for life, for eternity?"

In a recent president's column in the Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine, Kirksey said some people expressed concern that he was "leaving the ministry" when he moved from the pastorate to his current position at Alexander.

"It is troubling because it reflects a narrow perspective of ministry held by a growing number of Christians," Kirksey wrote.

"If we continue to confine our Christianity to Christian

radio, Christian television, Christian businesses, and Christian gatherings, we will eventually choke the Gospel to death."

Since beginning his work with juvenile offenders, "I have never felt more deeply immersed in ministry, nor more needed than I am on that campus," he said.

"Daily I am with boys and girls in trouble who regularly ask me for a Bible or some other help with spiritual guidance. Many of them have hit bottom, with nowhere else to turn and no family who cares."

"They are the 'throw-aways' in our disposable society."

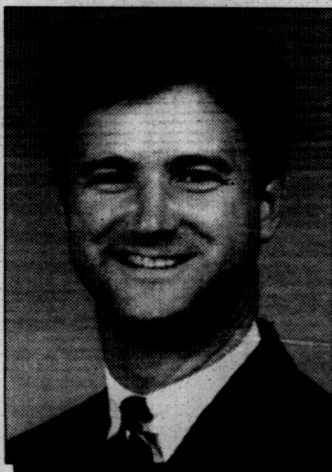
Describing himself as "part of God's salvage team sifting through the broken pieces of young lives," Kirksey said he is pleased that God "has strategically located me in a place far removed from the squeaky-clean atmosphere many associate with ministry, to work with juveniles for whom the Gospel really is good news."

Insisting that today's church "is missing a grand opportunity to proclaim the gospel to our nation," Kirksey told the convention crowd, "Grace is something that is easy to talk about and sing about in church."

"It is easy to study and teach, but when we personalize it and we put a face on it, then it becomes another matter."

"We say, 'Not in this instance,' and we begin to make it a conditional thing."

"When you make grace conditional," he warned, "that is not New Testament."



Kirksey

Student ministry on rise

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Increases in the number of students reached and total contributions for student missions highlighted the Southern Baptist student ministry report for 1998.

According to the annual statistics compiled by National Student Ministry of LifeWay Christian Resources, 276,399 college students were reached by Southern Baptist student ministry programs on college campuses in 1998, up almost 10% from last year's total of 248,670. The number of collegians involved in these programs on an ongoing basis also increased by 10%, from 105,490 in 1997 to 121,006 in 1998.

Total contributions to student missions — which includes contributions to state Baptist Student Union missions funds, campus-sponsored mission trip contributions and state student ministry department budgets for student missions — also increased, from \$3,363,393 in '97 to \$3,912,525 in '98.

Among other increases included in the '98 report were:

- ◆ preparing for church vocations, 18,625, up from 17,808;
- ◆ involved in Bible study groups, 43,561, up from 41,292;
- ◆ campuses with evangelistic projects, 834, up from 563;
- ◆ African-Americans involved in student ministry, 11,252, up from 9,145;
- ◆ churches, Sunday Schools, or missions students helped start, 373, up from 329.

Student conversions reported during '98 totaled 7,293, down slightly from the '97 total of 7,361. Other decreases included campuses with student ministry programs, 991, down from 1,056; internationals involved in student ministry, 9,698, down from 10,218; and students involved in missions, 28,728, down from 29,901.

Looking back

10 years ago

About two dozen Southern Baptists from around the nation meet in Dallas to form Baptists Committed, described by participants as a "centrist" coalition within the Southern Baptist convention. The group hires David Currie of Paint Rock, Texas as full-time coordinator.

20 years ago

Birdie Lee Hubbard of Temple Church, Hattiesburg, is awarded her 13-year bar for perfect attendance in Sunday School. When asked if Year 13 was any harder than the previous 12 years, she replies, "Only because I had to attend a few Sundays with a broken arm."

50 years ago

According to an editorial in The Baptist Record, it costs the average rural preacher \$25-\$50 a month above what is received for the privilege of serving a quarter-time church. The Sunday School Superintendent should call the church to adequately support its pastor, the editorial states.

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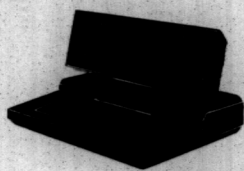
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Prepared for the new millennium

For Christians, the next couple of years should be most interesting — if not downright perplexing. As the secular world grapples for meaning in the Y2K (Year 2000) period and attempts to cope with the implications of the new millennium, we already know where to go for solutions.

Jesus Christ. That's it. He's the answer to all the questions, the sum of all the equations. Always has been, always will be.

For folks who don't believe that, however, there's going to be a bumpy 24-month ride. Every soothsayer and tea-leaf reader has concocted a vision of what the future holds, and there are sure to be plenty of people willing to buy into all those wild theories.

This Y2K hysteria is reminiscent of the Great Earthquake Scare of the early 1990s, among the many notable examples recorded in the annals of futurist quackery.

Do you remember that one? New Mexico scientist Iben Browning predicted that the huge New Madrid Fault running down the middle of the U.S. would rupture on cue on a specific date in December 1990, destroying the infrastructure of the country and plunging the nation — including Mississippi — into the cold darkness of a winter without modern conveniences.

Never mind that Browning had no formal education, training, or experience in the field of earthquake research. Never mind that several of his earlier hare-brained predictions and experiments quickly came to light.

Never mind that legitimate earthquake experts across the country asserted that while a major earthquake was inevitable along the fault, no one could predict the exact date of such an occurrence.

Never mind all those reality checks. People in Mississippi actually quit their jobs when their bosses declined to give them the day off to flee the earthquake. People in Mississippi sold ancestral property rather than have it swallowed up in

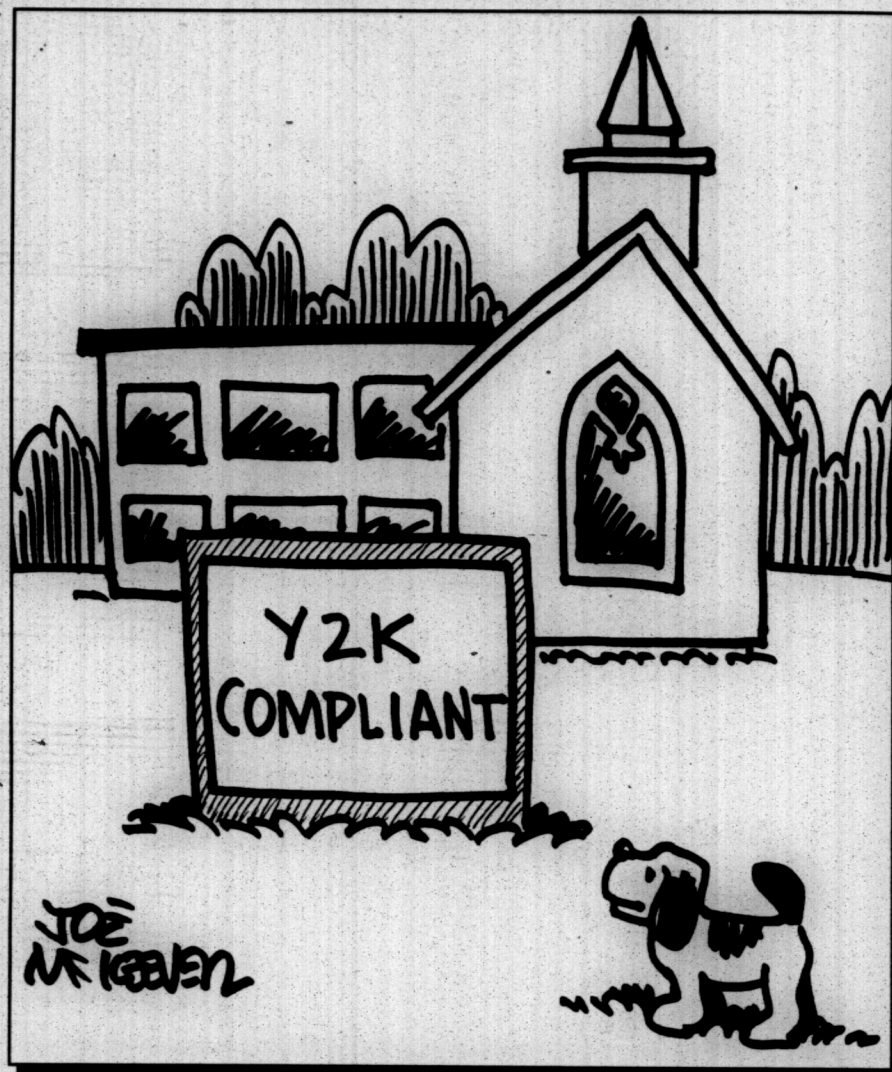
the massive temblor to come. Believe it or not, some people in Mississippi decided to pull up stakes and move permanently to other states.

Well, December 1990 came and went without a major earthquake along the New Madrid Fault. A lot of people in Mississippi and across the middle of the country had egg on their faces — or worse.

More devastating than the embarrassment of having been sucked into Browning's scheme, however, was the melodrama's negative impact on earthquake preparedness. Some day or some year soon, a major earthquake will occur along the New Madrid Fault and very few people will be prepared, thanks to Browning's Chicken Little scare.

So it is with the current Y2K panic. Some of the dire warnings may be legitimate but as ersatz numerologists search the Old Testament for secret codes and computer fakirs warn of microchip meltdowns, chances are good that some form of civilization will still be around on Jan. 1, 2001 — and until Christ returns.

More devastating than the embarrassment of having been sucked into the Y2K schemes, however, will be the negative



impact on spiritual preparedness, thanks to all the Chicken Little end-of-the-world scenarios now in wide circulation.

Jesus was clear on this point: No one but the Father knows the fateful day that the world as we know it will end (Matt. 24:36). Therefore, the key is to be prepared as if every day might be the day that Christ returns.

For those of us who have accepted Jesus as our personal Lord and Savior (John 3:16), we need not worry about the new millennium.

We're already Y2K Compliant.

GUEST OPINION:



Caring for our spiritual gardens

By Kathy Latch Johnson, member
Glendale Church, Glen

Both gardens and lives have seasons, and no matter how we try, neither can be rushed.

There is a great deal of waiting. There is birth, growth, pleasure, hard work, and productivity. Unfortunately, there are also destroyers. They are not green worms, but they have the same effect.

Working as a nurse, I see spiritual, mental, and physical counterparts to that green worm in my garden. I see them in myself as well as in others. These destroyers come

in the form of pride, greed, anger, denial, fear, and diseases.

The Bible gives a list of worms in Gal. 5:19-21. Seems that humans have a greater variety of destroyers.

Think about your life! Are there any destroyers eating away at the fruitfulness of your life? What is your destroyer? Is it shame, guilt, fear, unforgiveness? Is it a dark secret about which only you and God know?

Perhaps you feel you had no choice in the matter, because

your destroyer was handed to you by someone else. Maybe it is the consequence of a wrong decision made long ago.

Whatever it is, it started out small just like that camouflaged worm, but has grown and damaged the fruitfulness of your life. It has been there so long that it seems to be part of you, just as that worm seemed to be part of the tomato.

Good news! There is a way to get rid of the destroyers. Just as my friend tenderly watches her plants, God watches over our lives.

He is life's master gardener. He knows all about branches, vines, and destroyers. He wants to repair the destruction, and restore the years eaten away.

We have a choice — to let the destroyers continue, or allow God to do spiritual gardening. He wants to produce his fruit in us. Gal. 5:22-23 tells of that fruit.

Another thing about gardens and life — we do reap what we sow, but God allows us to plant new crops.

Johnson, a registered nurse, also serves on the Town of Glen board of aldermen.

'99 evangelism conference to emphasize witnessing

"We are going to pinpoint witnessing — how to share your faith," said S. A. "Sonny" Adkins, Director of Evangelism for the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB). Adkins was referring to the 1999 Evangelism Conference, held January 18-19 at Crossgates Church in Brandon.

The conference begins at 1:30 p.m. on Jan. 18 and concludes on the evening of Jan. 9 at 9 p.m.

Under the theme of "Celebrate Jesus 2000," Adkins said this year's program will provide practical insights into how to do evangelism in a variety of different ways.

"We are going to have testi-



Fay



Welch



Sheffield

monies by laymen, and we will have the writer of the Witness Without Fear materials, Bill Fay," Adkins said.

"Also, Bobby Welch, the creator of the FAITH material, will preach and, for the first 400 who sign up for lunch on Tuesday, will tell about how the FAITH program works," Adkins said.

Fay is the author and producer of the book and video series "Share Jesus without Fear." He is a graduate of Denver Seminary, has an internationally syndicated radio show, "Let's Go," and is a chaplain with the Professional Golfers of America.

Welch is pastor of First Church, Daytona Beach, Fla. where the FAITH program originated.



Futral



Reccord



Scott

Adkins pointed out two other aspects of this year's program that offers practical help for the pastor or church staff member in motivating evangelism. Forrest Sheffield, pastor of Harrisburg Church, Tupelo, will present the revival preparation manual he has prepared, and Jim McNeil of St. Louis, Missouri will demonstrate how to use drama in evangelism.

Other personalities on program include: Jim Futral, MBCB executive director-treasurer; Bob Reccord, president of the North American Mission Board; P.J. Scott, pastor of First Church, Olive Branch; Bob Pittman, pastor of Kirby Woods Church, Memphis; Thad Hamilton, evangelism specialist for the Georgia convention; and Jarvis Ward, national facilitator



Hamilton



Ward

of city/county ministry for Mission America.

Also on program are musicians John Wells, an evangelist from Crystal Springs; Allen Harris, minister of music, North Oxford Church; Graham Smith, Director of Church Music Department for MBCB; the Mississippi Singing Churchmen; and the Mississippi Baptist Orchestra.

For more information contact Adkins at the Evangelism Department of the MBCB, P. O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone (601) 968-3800, or toll-free outside of Jackson (800) 748-1651.



THE
SECOND
FRONT PAGE

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YEC '98 overflows Miss. College coliseum

By Carl M. White
Associate Editor

A. E. Wood Coliseum on the Mississippi College campus in Clinton was filled to overflowing with over 3,000 teenagers and their sponsors Dec. 28-29 for the 1998 Youth Evangelism Conference (YEC), according to Don Lum, youth consultant for the department of evangelism at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB).

"God was at work in students' lives," Lum said. There were a total of 63 decisions registered during the two day event — 15 for salvation, nine responding to the call to ministry, and 39 rededications, he said.

The conference included messages from South Carolina evangelist Ken Smith, drama by Grant and Jennifer Medford of Illinois, and a concert by Avalon, a popular

Christian vocal group with Mississippi roots. In addition, worship was led by Mike Harland, minister of music at Broadmoor Church, Jackson.

Lum indicated that 3,069 persons registered for the event, "but that does not include the leadership and a number of people who came just for the concert on Monday night," he said.

"There are three ways to evaluate an event like this," Lum said. "First, the response of the students. Second, the response of the youth ministers and adult sponsors. Third, feedback from those who came and led."

"On all three accounts this was a tremendous success," he said.

"I just talked to a lady who called to say this was the first one (YEC) she had attended and it was just awesome."

"The bottom line is, we had kids who came to this, and we know they left changed by God," Lum said.

"We had young people who felt led to make a public commitment to youth ministry, to preach, and other full time ministries. One said he felt called to medical missions," Lum reported.

One student wrote, "I rededicate my life to serve others and not let the world transform me any longer."

Another student, the quarterback on his high school football team, wrote, "I want to walk a closer walk with God and try to be a leader in my group."

After tallying the decisions, Lum said they are sent to the local church indicated on the card so that the pastor or youth leader will know how to best minister to them.

"For instance," Lum said, "this card



says 'I want someone to disciple me.' This is the information a pastor or youth minister needs."

Next year's YEC will follow a different format from previous years due to the change from 1999 to the year 2000, Lum said.

The 1999 event will be one day — Friday, Dec. 31 — from 10 a.m. to midnight.

For more information about YEC or other youth evangelism events, contact Lum at the evangelism department of the MBCB, P. O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone (601) 968-3800, or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651.

CELEBRATING GOD — Mike Harland, minister of music at Broadmoor Church, Jackson, asked, "What do you say we lift the roof of this place one more time before we go?" during the final Dec. 29 session of the 1998 Youth Evangelism Conference at Mississippi College. (Photo by Carl M. White)



DO IT THIS WAY — Drama specialists Jennifer (left) and Grant Medford (center), give instruction to an unidentified participant for the skit, "What's My Line?" during the 1998 Youth Evangelism Conference at Mississippi College. (Photo by Carl M. White)

1998 Youth Evangelism Conference highlights

"God, somewhere over the last two days we got a glimpse of what it might be like if we got serious with you."

Ken Smith, evangelist



"You should not make the decision of where to go to college based on five home football games."

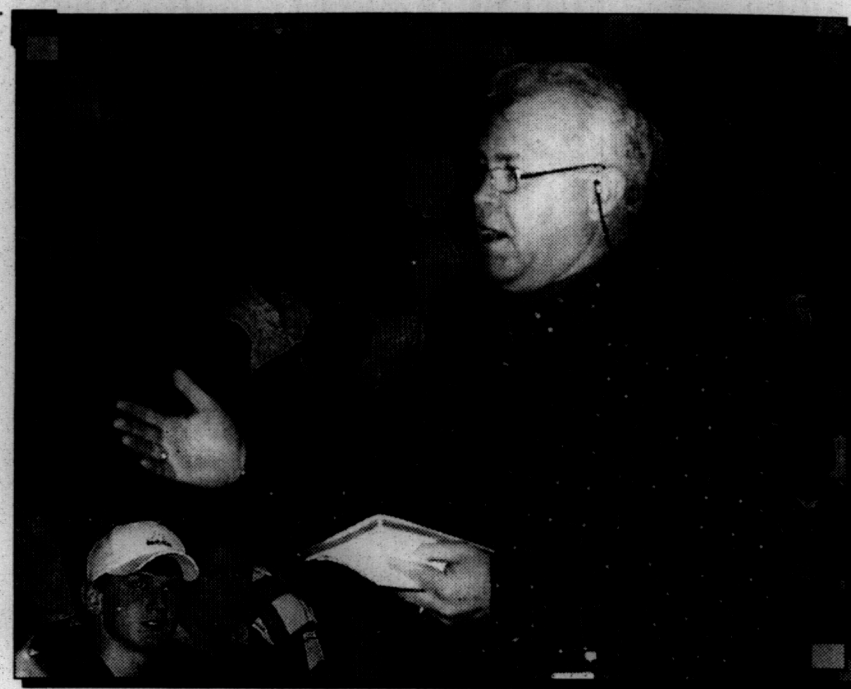
Howell, Todd, president, Mississippi College

"God, I want to run your race . . . thanks for trusting me with the faith. I won't let you down."

Jennifer Medford (playing a teenage girl in prayer)

"Don't you dare let your knowledge of Jesus stay where it is today."

Ken Smith, evangelist



"There is something about these youth deals that scares me. You get on a high, clap for Jesus and then go home. This message is about how to make it real at Walmart."

Ken Smith, evangelist



Miss. CBF installs new moderator

The Mississippi Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (MCBF) announced recently the election of a new state moderator and the success of several mission endeavors, according to Bradley Pope, coordinator for MCBF.

Susan Hooks Meadors began a year of service as the Moderator of MCBF in October after being elected at the annual fall meeting, Pope said. Meadors currently serves as minister of youth and education at Northside Church, Clinton.



Meadors

She is a 1981 graduate of Baylor University and a 1988 graduate of Southern Seminary. Between educational pursuits, she also served two years as a Journeyman missionary with the International Mission Board.

Meadors is married to John T. Meadors, who serves as an assistant professor in the department of Christian studies and philosophy at Mississippi College. They have three children.

Pope also reported a record year in mission support from MCBF churches. Individuals from 70 different churches in Mississippi contributed \$3,600 to pay the tuition for 13 Benjara (Gypsy) evangelists in India to receive training. To further enhance the ministry of these evangelists, Pope said, another \$2,760 was given to purchase 13 bicycles, 15 cassette players and New Testament tapes, and 75 New Testaments. In addition these funds supported a medical team for two weeks and provided seminary scholarships for two Indian students.

Another project that garnered \$4,480 in support from Mississippi churches was the distribution of blankets by CBF missionaries in the Middle east to Gypsy people.

Pope also reported that when the appeal came to Mississippi Baptists to respond to the relief efforts for the Honduran people due to Hurricane Mitch, a number of MCBF churches and individuals around the state responded. Many boxes of non-perishable food was contributed, along with over \$4,000.

For more information about MCBF contact Pope at (601) 355-7824.

"It's one of the best conferences I've ever been to."

Leslie Browning, Ocean Springs

"The biggest thing about this conference for me is learning what a correct attitude toward witnessing should be."

Anthony Shells, Morelle

"I love this conference because it is a great spiritual experience and it's just the best way to meet God."

Taylor Armstrong, Clinton

"What I like most about the conference was the music and how everyone worshipped together."

Mindy Espey, Meridian

"The thing I like about the conference was the drama team and their interpretations of the message through drama. It was great, wonderful."

Jason Triplett, Gulfport

Writers needed for 'love inside an envelope'

DALLAS (BP) — When Charlene Briggs opened her mailbox in suburban Dallas, she found a package carefully wrapped with twine and brown paper, with the corners sealed by red wax. The package postmark: Dagestan, Russia. The name Lukina Ljudmila was on the return address.

Inside, Briggs discovered a black, fringed shawl with lovely red roses in each corner. "It touched my heart," said Briggs, a Texas Baptist. "I knew just to pay the postage was a sacrifice for Lukina."

Since August 1994, when Briggs wrote the first note and enclosed a photograph of herself, she and Ljudmila have exchanged letters several times each year. In her typically one-page, single-spaced, computer-written note, Briggs — a Christian since childhood — has shared snatches of her spiritual journey with Ljudmila, a new Christian from Russia.

Another Southern Baptist, Mitzi W. Bess of Belmont, N.C., read about Bridge of Friendship in a flyer distributed through First Church there in 1995.

"Through the grace of God, I have a gift of discipling. I knew this was something I would love to be a part of," Bess said. "In my first letter [to Trina Ternovskaya of the Ukraine], I introduced myself and said, 'I want to introduce you to the most important person in my life — Jesus Christ.' That was

March 1995. In April she wrote me. I cried when I got that first letter. I believe the Holy Spirit brought us together."

Bess and Briggs are among thousands who have shared Christian love, concern and prayer with fellow Christians in the former Soviet Union through Bridge of Friendship, operated by ASSIST Ministries in Garden Grove, Calif.

"This is a simple program giving Christians in the U.S. an opportunity for a one-on-one relationship with Christians in a country that we once considered our enemy. We call it love tucked inside an envelope," said Dan Wooding, founder and director of ASSIST Ministries.

Information about becoming a pen pal with a new Christian in Russia and neighboring countries can be obtained by calling ASSIST Ministries at (714) 530-6598; e-mail, assist@compuserve.com; Internet site, www.rwcc.com/assist.htm; or writing to P.O. Box 2126, Garden Grove, CA 92642-2126.

"In many cases it can be like adopting a spiritual child or grandchild — you pour your life into the life of a new Christian," Wooding said.

The program began more than five years ago after ASSIST sent out letters to 610,000 people from the former Soviet Union who told CBN they had prayed the sinner's prayer during a telecast. From that initial mailing, more than

76,000 Christians returned questionnaires with hopes of being linked. So far only 6,000 American Christians have responded.

"We desperately need more Americans to step forward," Wooding said.

The tools of this ministry involve but a small investment: stationery, ink, postage. The other investment: time. Briggs spends about 20 minutes composing a letter three or four times a year.

While the door of opportunity remains open, Wooding and his wife Norma would like other Southern Baptists to take this unique opportunity to share their faith. "The situation in Russia is bad at the moment," Wooding said.

"The economic crisis and a high incidence of crime do not augur well for the Russian people. If carried out, a restrictive law regarding religion could also mean the expulsion of Western missionaries from Russia."

China writing project enjoying success

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP) — As educators John and Frances Carter conducted English workshops for Chinese teachers five years ago, they got an interesting request: Could you recruit American students to correspond with mine?

The teacher — from the Anhui Province — believed it would be a lively way for Chinese students to hone English skills.

Carter, who heads the International Book Project of Samford University in Birmingham, Ala., agreed to give it a try. The first year, almost 1,000 Chinese submitted their names and addresses. Since 1993, the program has burgeoned.

More than 9,000 Americans — junior high, high school, and college students on urban campuses and in rural communities around the country — have been matched with Chinese counterparts.

To American educators and leaders who sign on as a sponsor for a group of American pen pals, Carter sends guidelines. "We work within the framework of the Chinese government which is communist and we want our corresponders to be aware of that," he said.

Carter also wants Americans to be aware that for the Chinese, correspondence is costly; replies are sometimes slow. He estimates that paper and postage for one letter equal the price of a student's food for one day.

The Chinese view it as an investment. "I doubt," one Chinese teacher told him, "that American students have any concept of the excitement their letters generate among our students."

Carter expanded the program this year to include students from Indonesia. "I am not surprised this has caught on," he reflected.

"This is one of the things in my life that I have felt the Lord leading."

For more information, call John Carter at (205) 822-4106 or write him at Samford University, P.O. Box 2305, Birmingham, AL 35229.

TELEPHONE TERRORISM

I am sure Alexander Graham Bell thought he was doing a wonderful thing when he developed a machine that would connect one person to another person so they could express their ideas to each other by voice and be connected, though separated.

Some of us watched as the evolution of this machine expanded in ways that Bell or any of us could have ever dreamed possible. From wires stretched house to house across the country, we now are connected by satellites and microwave systems that project signals to every corner of the globe.

It is almost a daily occurrence to watch someone driving and carrying on a conversation at the same time, and the person to whom they're talking may be in another part of the city or another part of the world.

It is amazing. I guess for most of us, most of the time, it is good. On the other hand, for most of us, some of the time, it is not so good.

How so? Well, most of us have been targets of telephone terrorism — the fancy name in the business world is "telemarketing," but it is terrorism.

You've experienced it as folks break into your house



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

with the ring of a telephone, ready to sell or give you something. There they are, holding you by the ear, trying to make a deal on something you may not want, don't need, and in fact might be better off without.

You try to be nice, but that only prolongs your involvement. You try to tell them no, but they are trained and probably have right there before them written instructions to follow when someone says no.

It's a pain. So, what do you do? Obviously many people have paid the extra monthly charge to get "Caller ID."

If they cannot identify who is calling, they won't respond to the call. That's not good either, for there are people to whom you need to talk and probably to whom you would like to talk who may be identified only as "unknown."

So this wonderful invention that allows us to hear the unique and special sound of a friend's or relative's voice, has

turned into a system to which we have developed a resistance. We become desensitized to wanting to hear from anybody and thereby miss some of the calls we need to get.

Apparently our anti-telephone antibodies have also learned to reject the call from God, as he rings our number and we fail to answer.

Just recently I met a man who was commenting on my new work with Mississippi Baptists. He asked if so-and-so was still working for the Convention. I said, "Yes sir, he sure is."

He said, "Well, let me tell you something. If he ever calls you late at night, don't talk to him." He smiled and I asked, "Why is that?"

He said, "If he calls you late at night, he is either trying to con you out of something or into something," and he laughed.

He went on to express his high regard for the man and to

express gratitude for the fact that he is working for the Lord and for Mississippi Baptists.

As I left, I wondered to myself how many people might feel the same way — only are serious about it. They are afraid that the call extended and the opportunity given to serve the Lord is little more than a divine telemarketing scheme to conjure them into doing something they really don't want to do.

While some of these telephone terrorists have as their goal serving their own interest, it is not so with God. The Lord will not ask you or me to do anything except what ultimately is best for us.

When we refuse his call, we are in turn refusing to receive the best. What should we do? I don't know that you have to answer the phone every time somebody calls, but when it's the Lord, you'd do well to pick up.

Young Samuel heard the call late in the night and he was not sure who it was (1 Sam. 3). He thought it was Eli. "No," Eli said, "go back to sleep." It came again, and again Samuel thought Eli called. "No, go back to bed. But, if you hear the call again, say 'Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth.'" He did, and it was the Lord.

Has your heavenly phone been ringing? Answer! You'll be glad you did!

Correction

"On page five of the Dec. 17 issue in the article entitled, 'Miss. Baptist evangelists available to serve churches,' Steve Walker of Pinola should have been listed as a music evangelist rather than a preaching evangelist. His telephone number is (601) 847-4375, or church (601) 847-6652. The Baptist Record regrets the error.

JUST FOR THE RECORD

Mississippians receive SBTS degrees

Southern Seminary (SBTS) in Louisville, Ky., awarded degrees to 97 students in its 182nd commencement during a Dec. 11 ceremony.

Graduates with Mississippi connections are Ronald Clyde McLain, Richton, doctor of philosophy; and Doreen (Dee) McCardle, Brandon, master of divinity in missions, evangelism and church growth.



McLain



Mantee Church GAs



Mantee Church Acteens

Mantee Church, Mantee, recognized its GAs and Acteens who had completed a level in World Ventures on StudiAct. GAs (pictured from left, third row) are Anna Hinkey, Amanda Hinkey, Courtney Jackson, Sherrie Gail Springer, Marla Stone, Katy Kilpatrick; (second row) Anna Johnson, Lindsey Kilpatrick, Kayla Davis, Amber Hudspeth, Leigh Anna Springer;

(first row) Maribeth Avent, Heather Cummings, Caitlin Carty, Josie Clark, and Hailey Baker. Acteens (first row) Kari Lawrence, Danna Stone, Shanan Johnson; (second row) Amanda Wilker, Danielle Wilker, and Heather Stephens. Ann Millsaps is WMU director; Ann Stone is Acteen leader; GA leaders are Joyce Hudspeth, Jennifer Winter, Sandy Kilpatrick, Susan George, Mary Turner, and Cyndy Cortez. Ken Hester is pastor.

DivorceCare, a special help seminar and support group for people experiencing divorce and separation, will be held at Bayou View Church, Gulfport, beginning on Jan. 15 at 6:30 p.m. For more information, call (228) 863-2482.

Crossgates Church, Brandon, will host gospel recording artist John Starnes as special guest on Jan. 10. Starnes will be in concert during the 9 a.m., 10:30 a.m., and 6 p.m. services. For more information, call (601) 825-2562.

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Moselle Memorial Church, Jones Association, held ground breaking services on Nov. 22. Planned additions include both a new sanctuary and educational space ready for worship by Oct. 3, which is the annual homecoming service. Members taking part in the ceremonial first shovel of dirt include, left to right: John Jones, building committee; Linda Smith, building committee; Pam Robinson, building committee; Sherra Orman, building committee; Michael Street, pastor; Bobby Thompson, chairman of building committee; Billy Ryals, building committee; Jack Thompson, chairman of deacons; Nancy Shows, building committee; Max Robertson, contractor; Kerry Spalding, chairman of finance committee; and Jim Walls, building committee.



First Church, Columbus, recently participated in the Samaritan's Purse, Operation Christmas Child. Pictured are some of the older GAs, younger RAs, and Mission Friends with all 310 boxes collected.

Causey scholarship set

A scholarship fund at Mississippi College (MC) in Clinton has been established in honor of Bill Causey, retired former executive director-treasurer of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, and his wife Charlotte.

The Causeys' three children — Carley Causey, Carol Causey Turner, and Billy Causey Jr. — announced the scholarship fund at the Sept. 10 retirement dinner in Jackson that celebrated their father's nine years as MBCB executive director-treasurer. 1998 also marks Bill Causey's fiftieth year in Christian ministry.

Scholarship recipients will be selected from married students who have committed their lives to full-time Christian service, from recommendations based on need by the MC department of Christian studies in conjunction with the school's office of financial aid.

For more information on the Causey fund and other MC scholarship funds, contact Amy Wolgamott, college information and individual research coordinator, at (601) 925-3257.

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- ✕ Music



Mississippi College

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\$7.50 each

(Deadline to register is Feb. 15)

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or call 1-800-748-1651 for more details.

* PLEASE NOTE DATE CHANGES THAT WERE PRINTED INCORRECTLY ON PAST FLYERS.

ISRAEL PASTOR NEEDED

Editor:

There is an urgent need for a pastor to serve an international English-speaking congregation in Israel which is located about ten miles from Tel Aviv on the grounds of Baptist Village. Baptist Village is the conference/camp area for Christians in Israel.

The congregation meets in one of their buildings and is composed of people from 15-plus countries from around the world.

It is a very sweet fellowship with everyone being respected and loved.

A retired couple or a couple that would have some income would be best. The church will

pay for airfare, provide a furnished apartment, provide for transportation needs, but not necessarily a car, and other needs as agreed on between the prospective pastor and the congregation.

Serving this congregation will not only be rewarding but will give unlimited opportunities to travel around Israel and take advantage of all the historic and biblical sites.

We are leaving this special loving congregation with mixed emotions, but we feel that it is the Lord's will that we do so at this time.

My wife and I wholeheartedly would recommend this congregation to you.

For those who have an interest, please contact me by e-mail

at bradley@netvision.net.il, or by phone at 011-972-9-958-5245.

This position needs to be filled by May 1, 1999, and June 1, 1999 at the latest. We pray that God will speak to some couple and they will feel led to come to this special Holy Land and minister to this special congregation.

Robert A. Bradley, pastor
Baptist Village Congregation
Tel Aviv, Israel

UNIQUE SERVICE HELD

Editor:

The first Sunday night of December, we had a most unique and meaningful worship service entitled "Hanging of the Green."

In this wonderful service, the congregation participates in decorating the sanctuary for Christmas and in setting the atmosphere for an allusive season of celebration.

Familiar parts of this spirited season garnish the service: carols, solos, Scripture reading, and a message centered around the birth of our Savior.

Interwoven in all of this is the actual "Hanging of the Green." Wreaths are hung on

walls, garland strung over railings, candles lit in windows, and advent candles kindled on the communion table.

Poinsettias are strategically placed at the front as names are read announcing who gave them and in honor or memory of whom.

This moving and effective service sets the spirit of Christ's birth retold. Each piece used in decorating the sanctuary is explained in its significance as to why it is used this time of year and its relation to Christ and his coming.

Our sanctuary is beautiful with the tapestry of colors of Christmas encircling it.

There is also great meaning to these colors when detail is given to them, and many members have a "hands on" involvement because they bring in each item that goes into decorating the sanctuary.

A service such as this would add great enrichment to any congregation. We look forward to making it an annual event.

Hopefully, it will grow as we add more to this "Hanging of the Green."

John H. Cockrell, pastor
Rawls Springs Church
Hattiesburg

STAFF CHANGES

First Church, Gautier, has called **Wylie Dilmore** as minister of music and senior adults effective Nov. 7. A native of Canton, Dilmore received his education at the University of Southern Mississippi and

Southwestern Seminary. His previous place of service was First Church, Florence.

First Church, Crystal Springs, called **Robert (Robbie) Armstrong** as part-time minister of youth effective Nov. 1. Armstrong, 21, is currently a junior at Mississippi College. He previously served as youth intern at his home church, Broadmoor, Jackson, and also at First Church, Yazoo City.

Faith Church, Jackson, has called **Greg Wolfe** as pastor. A native of St. Louis, Mo., Wolfe is a graduate of Southern Seminary, Louisville, Ky. He also studied at Southwest Baptist University, Bolivar, Mo.; Midwestern Seminary, Kansas City, Mo.; and Tel Aviv University.

Highland Church, Crystal Springs, has called **Mark D. Jones** as pastor effective Nov. 29. A native of Memphis, Tenn., Jones is a graduate of New Orleans Seminary. He previously served at Moss Hill in New Albany.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Unsigned letters will not be printed. No multi-copy or form letters will be used.

Each correspondent must include an address and telephone number for verification. In special instances, name may be withheld at writer's request and editor's discretion.

Please include the name of cooperating Mississippi Baptist church where correspondent is a member. (Mississippi Baptists' letters will receive priority when space is limited.)

Letters must be limited to 250 words. All correspondence is subject to editing.

Correspondents should refrain from personal attacks. The opinions expressed in letters to the editor do not necessarily reflect the views of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

No more than one letter from any individual will be printed during a three-month period.

When in the judgement of the editor a given issue has received sufficient attention, correspondence dealing with it will no longer be published and a notice will be printed to that effect.

NAMES IN THE NEWS



Shady Grove Church, Pontotoc Association, ordained Tony Browning and Stacey Horton as deacons on Nov. 29. Pictured (from left) are Leonard D. Howell, pastor; Browning; and Horton.

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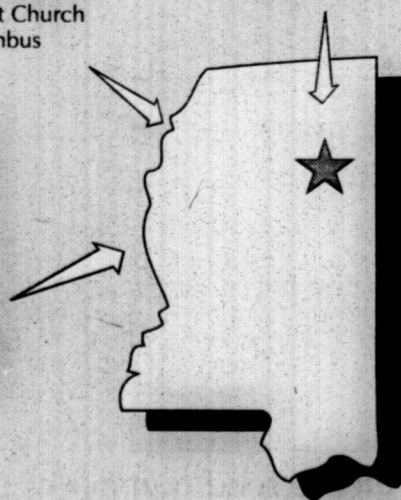
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African-American pastor joins seminary



NEW ORLEANS (BP) — Mississippi College graduate Kenneth B. Weathersby has been elected associate professor of church planting at New Orleans Seminary (NOBTS) and as such becomes the first African American pastor the seminary has appointed to a full-time faculty position.

Weathersby also will be director of the seminary's Cecil B. Day Center for Church Planting and direct the Nehemiah Project, a five-year partnership agreement between the Southern Baptist Convention's (SBC) North American Mission Board (NAMB) and NOBTS. NAMB's Nehemiah Project seeks to bring about a dramatically higher percentage of seminary students graduating to become church planters across the United States.

Weathersby, who will start teaching at NOBTS in January 1999 when the seminary's second semester begins, was elected Dec. 8 during the semi-annual session of the NOBTS trustee executive committee. In his position with the Nehemiah Project, he also will be a fully appointed missionary with NAMB.

"The appointment of Ken Weathersby to be both a professor and director for New Orleans Seminary's Nehemiah Project and

center for church planting is a strong affirmation of the wide diversity of gifted leadership within the SBC as God continues to bring key leaders into strategic places as part of a continent-wide church-planting movement," said Richard Harris, NAMB's vice president for church planting.

David Putman, NAMB's coordinator for the Nehemiah Project, said Weathersby is "one of our absolutely best church-planting leaders across the board and as such will catalyze our program across North America. Many SBC leaders see Weathersby's appointment at NOBTS as a home run, as a strategic piece in our overall church-planting strategy."

Weathersby currently is an evangelism specialist and team leader for evangelism strategies for the Tennessee Baptist Convention, where he has worked since 1993. He also was director of the Tennessee Baptist Convention's black church extension and multihousing office for four years.

Before moving to Tennessee, Weathersby was a church planter and pastor in Kentucky, Alabama, Ohio, and most recently Louisiana, where he started Douglas Avenue Church in Baton Rouge and was pastor 1989-93.

Weathersby is the author of two books: "How to Start a Church in an African-American Community," published by the North American Mission Board, and "Develop a Heart to Help the Poor, Create

a Safer World," published by the Woman's Missionary Union, Birmingham, Ala.

Weathersby completed the bachelor of arts degree at Mississippi College, Clinton; the master of divinity degree at Southern Seminary, Louisville, Ky.; and the doctor of ministry degree at Reformed Theological Seminary, Jackson, where his dissertation was a study of church-planting strategies in inner-city Memphis, Tenn., and the implementation of Hope Centers in the black multifamily housing community.

Weathersby is married to the former Belva Kennedy of Charleston, S.C., who is a credentialed social worker. The Weathersbys have two children.

"New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary is strategically located in an urban center that will provide a wonderful laboratory to test different strategies and models of church planting," Weathersby said.

"It is my goal to equip church planters to start Holy Spirit-driven churches with a Kingdom perspective that will influence this generation and unborn generations.

"We will work with and through the Baptist state conventions and associations of churches to strategically place our Nehemiah church planters. The Lord is at work in North America and the world, and I am glad to join him in his work. I am thankful to Southern Baptists for allowing me to serve as their missionary."

NOBTS, NAMB initiate church planting project

NEW ORLEANS (BP) — Trustee committees of both New Orleans Seminary (NOBTS) and the Southern Baptist Convention's (SBC) North American Mission Board (NAMB) in Alpharetta, Ga., met 500 miles apart Dec. 8 in their respective cities yet came to the same conclusion: NOBTS needs to be a part of NAMB's new church-planting endeavor known as the Nehemiah Project.

NAMB's Nehemiah Project, which now includes a five-year partnership agreement with NOBTS, seeks to bring about a dramatically higher percentage of seminary students graduating to become church planters across the United States.

For NOBTS, the agreement will have urban environments set as priority areas for new church starts, reinforcing New Orleans Seminary's own commitment to establishing healthy urban churches.

NAMB is working toward establishing the Nehemiah Project at all six of the SBC seminaries, as well as the Canadian Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Calgary.

This agreement, approved during the semi-annual session of the NOBTS trustee executive committee, will strengthen sev-

eral church planting opportunities already available to students at New Orleans Seminary, established by the SBC 81 years ago in the most urban setting of any of the six SBC seminaries.

Trustees last year approved two new master of divinity degrees with specializations in church planting, one in partnership with the SBC's International Mission Board and the other with NAMB. Each degree program includes a funded two-year internship on the field.

In 1987, New Orleans Seminary became the first SBC seminary to establish an endowed professorial position in church planting, named in honor of Cecil B. Day.

Day, the founder of the national Days Inn motel chain, had a passion for church planting, especially in the northeastern United States.

For nearly 20 years, many NOBTS students have participated in NAMB's Praxis pro-

gram, a 10-week summer internship to start churches in unchurched areas.

Through the Nehemiah Project, NAMB will provide resources for each seminary to hire a professor of church planting who also will be director of each seminary's church-planting center. At each church-planting center, students will be prepared through education, hands-on training and mentoring to start healthy churches among North America's unchurched people.

At NOBTS, because of the already established church-planting endowment fund, the center will be called the Cecil B. Day Center for Church Planting.

These church-planting directors, who all also will be fully appointed NAMB missionaries, will teach church-planting principles and will partner with the seminaries "to discover students with a calling, a giftedness, an ability and a temperament necessary for church planting," said Steve Lemke, NOBTS provost.

NAMB also will provide stipends to assist students during church planting internships under the project.

The name Nehemiah Project reflects the mission of an Old Testament prophet called by God to lead his people back to Jerusalem about 445 B.C. to rebuild the city walls destroyed by captors and to reform the nation's spiritual life.

J.A. Brewer, 84, dies in Laurel

James Artis Brewer, 84, of Laurel, died Dec. 10. Funeral services were held at First Church of Sharon with burial in Sharon cemetery on Dec. 13.

Brewer was a retired minister, serving churches in Mississippi and Texas for 48 years. He served as director of missions in Jasper County and was director of group missions at Clarke College in Newton.

Brewer is survived by his wife Cleo Adams Brewer of Laurel; son, Johnny Brewer of Laurel; daughter, Barbara Olson of Virginia Beach, Va.; four grandchildren, David and Holly Edwards, and Johnny Jr., and Brad Brewer; and two great-grandchildren, Jessica and Ethan Brewer.

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Abortion figures, facilities decline in '90s

WASHINGTON (BP) — The number of abortions and abortion-providing facilities in the United States has decreased markedly in the 1990s, according to a survey by a research organization identified with the abortion industry.

Not only has a decline in both categories been recorded in recent years, but the number of abortions is at its lowest in 20 years and the number of abortion facilities has decreased by nearly one-third from its highest point in the early 1980s, The Alan Guttmacher Institute (AGI) announced Dec. 11.

The number of abortions in the country fell 11% from 1992, the last year for which AGI had performed research on abortion providers, to 1996. The 1.37 million abortions for 1996 were a slight increase from the 1.36 million of 1995 but a large decline from the 1.61 million reported in 1990, according to AGI. The 1990 total was the highest since

abortion was legalized by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1973, according to AGI.

The 1995-96 figures were the lowest since 1977, when there were about 1.32 million abortions, AGI reported. The abortion rate, which is the number of abortions per 1,000 women age 15 to 44, and the abortion ratio, which is the percentage of pregnancies that end in abortion, also were lower than they have been in two decades, according to AGI. The abortion rate in 1996 was 22.9 and the ratio 26.1%. The highest annual figures, according to AGI, were a rate of 29.3 in both 1980 and 1981 and a ratio of 30.4 in 1983.

The survey also showed a 14% decrease since 1992 in the number of facilities performing abortions. From 1988 to 1992 there was only an 8% decline in such facilities. The peak year for abortion-providing facilities was 1982, when there were 2,908. In 1996, that total had fallen to 2,042.

The decline in facilities providing abortions has impacted some states more than others. Among states that showed at least a 50% decline from 1982 to 1996 in the number of abortion providers were: Alabama, from 45 to 14; Arkansas, 13 to 6; Georgia, 82 to 41; Iowa, 25 to 8; Kansas, 23 to 10; Maine, 39 to 16; Mississippi, 13 to 6; Missouri, 29 to 10; New Mexico, 26 to 13; Tennessee, 47 to 20; Texas, 128 to 64; West Virginia, 10 to 4; and Wisconsin, 29 to 11.

The study showed California had the largest number of abortion providers in 1996 with 492. North Dakota and South Dakota had the fewest providers, with one each.

The largest decline in providers has been among hospitals and physicians' offices rather than abortion clinics, AGI reported. Such clinics perform 91% of abortions, however, according to AGI.

Pro-life advocates welcomed the results. The study is "more good news about Americans' increasing disaffection with abortion," said Helen Alvare, spokesperson for the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. "Other studies show that rates of teenage sexual involvement are also dropping, and fewer young people are adopting pro-abortion positions," Alvare said in a written statement.

The American public's level "of distress is growing not only with abortion itself but with the non-marital, sexual relationships that lead to most abortions," she said. "Now more than ever, those who offer alternatives to abortion and alternatives to the idea of casual sex should step forward with new confidence. People are ready to listen."

Laura Echevarria, spokesperson for the National Right to Life Committee, said in a written release, "While we are pleased to see a drop in the number of abortions, it remains a tragedy that 1.37 million unborn children died in 1996 and many more have died since then. The pro-life movement will continue its educational and legislative efforts to protect

women and their unborn children from abortion."

While Alvare and Echevarria attributed the declining abortion figures to the work of pro-life and pro-abstinence advocates, as well as changes in attitudes among young people about sex and abortion, AGI pointed to other factors. Increasing numbers of women are in older age groups and teenagers are having fewer unintended pregnancies, some because of improved use of contraceptives, said Stanley Henshaw, AGI's deputy director of research, in a written statement.

"Other factors, such as attitudes toward abortion, decreasing access to abortion services and anti-abortion violence — and the degree to which these factors have had an impact — are more difficult, if not impossible, to determine," Henshaw said.

Polls earlier this year showed a decline in the public's support for abortion rights. In January, a Gallup poll showed 23% of Americans support legal abortion in all circumstances, an 8% drop from September 1995. From 1975 to 1995, Gallup surveys showed an increase in support for abortion in all circumstances.

A New York Times/ CBS News poll also conducted in January revealed a decline in support for abortion under certain circumstances. The survey showed only 25% of respondents said a woman should be able to have an abortion if her pregnancy would interrupt her career. In a Times/CBS poll in 1989, 37% said yes to such a scenario.

AGI estimated 4,200 abortions were performed in 1996 using a combination of drugs. It estimated 4,300 such abortions were done in the first half of 1997. It was the first time AGI had asked non-hospital facilities about abortion drugs in a survey. The abortion drug RU 486, also known as the French abortion pill, is pending approval by the Food and Drug Administration. It was used experimentally in some of the abortions reported to AGI.



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(I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you.
(I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with him.
(I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name (John 1:12).

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

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LIFE AND WORK

Rejecting pornography

Job 31:1-4; Ps. 101:3-4; 2 Cor. 10:4-5;
1 Thess. 4:2-5, 7

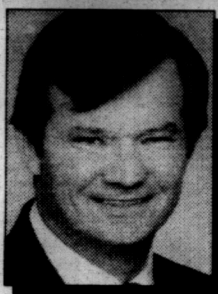
By Hugh Plunkett

Americans are confronted almost daily with pornography in newsstands, on television, in movies, on the Internet, and in sexually oriented businesses. Pornography can be defined as any portrayal of the human body or human behavior that cheapens human sexuality, condones or encourages sexual immorality, and/or degrades the God-given value of men, women, and children by identifying them as sources of sexual gratification.

Pornography is an addictive behavior. As with other addictions, people will not overcome a sexual addiction by merely being told that they should not participate in it or being warned

of its consequences. Many will need professional help. If pornography is so repugnant, why is it spreading throughout our society like wildfire? One reason is that it feeds off the natural sexual desires and the appreciation for beauty that God has given us all. It is important to realize that pornography is directed toward all. Sexual perversion knows no age or gender gap. God expects Christians to live holy lives. How are we as Christians to avoid being snared into pornography's trap?

Determine not to be involved (Ps. 101:3-4). The psalmist determined to keep his eyes from viewing vile things (v. 3) and to avoid participating in



Plunkett

any evil thing (v. 4). We as humans have a will and a determination. The Lord has promised to provide an escape from any temptation we face. David would have been much better off if he had turned his head when he caught a glimpse of Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11:1-4). The glimpse was innocent; the lingering gaze was not. Believers need to avoid places, people, and things that provide temptations to sin.

Discipline your eyes (Job 31:1-4). Job had determined that he would not look lustfully at a woman, knowing that no attitude or thought escapes God's attention. Pornography appeals to the gate that is the eye. The old admonition of "look, but not touch," falls short here because lust happens in the heart, not in the hands. Even so, there are other ways pornography is designed to appeal to people, including aural stimulation through phone sex lines.

Guard your thoughts (2

Cor. 10:4-5). In defending himself and his ministry (vv. 1-3), Paul explained that he lived by the principle that believers are to allow God to direct and control their thoughts. Many will say that just because you think about something doesn't make a difference in your actions or their consequences. Ask any death row inmate which carries the greater punishment — killing a person in an act of passion, or premeditated murder? The difference is life and death. We should daily work to bring our thought life into captivity to Christ.

Practice self-control (1 Thess. 4:3-5, 7). Those who practice sexual immorality are out of God's will for their lives. God desires that we should be holy and honorable, not morally compromised. It is important to note that the Greek word fornication is the root word for pornography. The word uncleanness (v. 7), implies that sexual impurity degrades not just the individual but brings reproach on the whole commu-

nity. The truth of this can be found on the front pages of any American newspaper. When our national leaders succumb to sexual impurity, America is shamed in the process. Ronald Reagan said it best when he said, "America is great because she is good. If America ceases to be good, she will cease to be great." Self-control is more than just a desired attribute. It is an irreplaceable trait for anyone who desires to be all that God would have him or her to be.

The Bible is the single greatest source of encouragement and instruction known to man. It is as current as today's headlines and it speaks truth to all who would hear. This is in direct contrast to the lies, false hopes, and expectations rendered by pornography. Our Heavenly Father gave us a wonderful gift when he made us sexual beings. Pornography cheapens and degrades this gift and it is wrong.

Plunkett is minister of music and adults at Clarksdale Church.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Who cares? — Resistance

Mark 6:1-7; 23

By Dee McDermitt

Up to this point, Mark records a spiritual "high." Jesus performs miracles, teaches crowds who flock to him wherever he goes, and shows his power over the natural and the supernatural. Now we see a spiritual "low" as Jesus encounters unbelief, hardness of heart, and substitution of tradition for God.

Resistance by unbelief (6:1-6a). Jesus and the disciples had gone back to his hometown of Nazareth. On the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and began to teach. The synagogue was a place where many people met, so Jesus had a large audience. When they heard him, they

could not deny the wisdom in what he said, but they were more concerned with where it came from than why. They had known Jesus from childhood and reasoned that he was the carpenter and Mary's son. He was too ordinary, too "blue collar." They expected some learned and well-spoken leader who would free them from the bondage of the Romans. If they had known their scriptures, they would have remembered that God uses ordinary people, like David and Gideon. Verse three says they took offense at him which means "stumbling block." He could not do many miracles nor did crowds gather to hear his power-



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ful teaching. The atmosphere was one of such skepticism and unbelief that Jesus was amazed. This would cause him to wistfully quote a Jewish proverb which speaks of a prophet being without honor only in his own hometown.

Resistance by hardness (6:51-52). Hardness of heart is an absence of spiritual perceptiveness and a lack of openness to new learning. We have all been guilty of this at times. In this passage, Mark says that this was found even in the disciples. Jesus and the disciples had just finished a day of ministry with the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand. It was late but Jesus told the disciples to go on across the Sea of Galilee to Bethsaida. He went into the hills to pray. Mark says that about three o'clock in the morning, Jesus saw the disciples in the middle of the

lake straining at the oars because a storm had arisen and the wind was against them. They were once again fighting the wind and the water — and the battle of faith — even though they had embarked on the journey in obedience to Jesus' command. Jesus went to them walking on the water. They thought he was a ghost and were terrified. They cried out and he got into the boat with them, identified himself and told them not to fear. (Throughout the book of Mark, the opposite of faith is fear.) As before, his presence brought peace and calm and, as before, they were amazed. Their fear and amazement points back to their failure to learn past lessons. In the pressure of the moment, they couldn't remember the last miracle (which, by the way, was still in their teeth since they had eaten, too) and could not apply that lesson about who Jesus really was to the present problem.

Resistance by substitution (7:5-8). Another troubling attitude that Jesus found present was seen in the Pharisees. This religious sect of Judaism was concerned with the proper keeping of both the written (or the Mosaic law) and the oral laws (a body of explanatory traditions written around the Mosaic law.) Notice that they don't attack Jesus directly but through his disciples (verse 5), and not on a point of faith but on a point of ritual from the "tradition of the elders." Jesus calls them hypocrites which means "someone who pretends to be other than they are." They put on a show of reverence, but their own words condemned them and revealed shallow, religious attitudes. They had substituted their own traditions for the authority of the Scriptures upon which they claimed to honor.

McDermitt is a member of Rawls Springs Church, Hattiesburg.

FAMILY BIBLE SERIES

Keep possessions in perspective

Luke 12:13-21

By Carl M. White

In the Gospels, twelve times Jesus gives his disciples a warning. He warns them about how to practice righteousness before others. He warns them about false prophets and those who would cause others to stumble. He warns them about the kind of men who would take them to court. Ten times he warns them about the Scribes, Pharisees, or Sadducees. Finally, he specifically warns his disciples about greed.

Now as then, the Lord Jesus speaks to us and gives us grave warnings. Be on your guard against every form of greed. For the believer, there is a proper perspective for possessions.

Possessions overvalued (13-

15). The proper perspective begins with assigning the correct value to possessions. Life does not consist of things possessed. That is not to say that believers cannot or should not have nice things. How can we expect to share a relevant witness to people if we live like hermits or withdraw into communes where no one possesses anything? All possessions are not evil.

Getting this right is just about the most difficult challenge we have as Christians living in America during prosperous times. We all want nice things, but when nice things become the driving force of our lives, or when the purchase of new things becomes a source of contentment,



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something is amiss. Contentment and purpose are spiritual qualities, and when we seek to find these in something other than our relationship with God, we cross the line to idolatry.

Perhaps the greatest sin of our nice, suburban, middle-to-upper-class Baptist churches is an overwhelming concern with appearances. As long as things look good, they must be good. While there is nothing intrinsically wrong with good appearances, when the concern for appearance takes the place of concern with reality, something is desperately wrong. As a pastor, when I came across a family who operated with this mind set, I labeled that family "dysfunctional." The same is true in our churches. Just because things look good doesn't mean that they are good.

This is why Jesus used the harsh words of warning.

Overvaluing possessions is a form of idolatry, and God is very clear about his feelings toward idolatry. He is jealous of our affection. He will not tolerate idolatry.

Consequences illustrated (16-21). Next, Jesus illustrates the consequences of misvaluing possessions. The parable of the unwise rich man warns us to place all possessions under the spotlight of eternal life.

When the time comes for you to face almighty God, of what value are possessions? Big barns filled with food were useless before the judgment seat of God. However, big barns filled with food, used to feed the hungry, to provide meaningful employment for people, and to provide a tithe and gifts to the work of the Kingdom, are of eternal value.

A couple came into a substantial inheritance. Instead of bringing them together, it was tearing them apart. They went to see a minister who advised them to give it all away before

it ruined their marriage.

The couple went away sad. Several days later, however, they returned. They had decided the pastor was correct, and were going to give it all away. They wanted his advice now as to what charities to which to give the money.

The pastor said, "Now you can't give it away." They were shocked. This didn't make sense.

The pastor said, "Before, you thought the money was yours to do with as you pleased. Now you understand it is not yours, it is God's, and you have been entrusted with it. Now you must manage it for God. Instead of making several one-time gifts to various charities, you must wisely invest it, making sure that this money will keep on giving to God's work for years to come."

We, too, are challenged to manage our possessions for the Kingdom.

White is a member of First Church, Clinton.

THE VILLAGE VIEW



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Gifts of Honor and Memory

A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor, with taste and respect, those who are and have been special to our special friends.

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Library's Internet restrictions struck down

ALEXANDRIA, Va. (BP) — In an early court battle over restrictions of Internet use in public libraries, a federal judge has struck down a Virginia county's policy for filtering sexually explicit materials from computer terminals used by the general public.

The federal judge, Leonie M. Brinkema of Alexandria, Va., herself a former librarian, made the ruling — without a trial — in a case filed by People for the American Way and later joined by the American Civil Liberties Union. According to Brinkema's Nov. 23 ruling, blocking the Internet "offends the guarantee of free speech in the First Amendment."

An American Library Association official, director of intellectual freedom Judith Krug, was among those filing court statements in behalf of the suit.

The ruling applies only to Leesburg, Va., and surrounding Loudoun County and the eastern-Virginia federal district where Brinkema is a judge,

but it nevertheless has sparked national interest and, according to one county library director in Ohio hit by controversy over Internet access, "gives us a good referral point." The county has not yet decided whether to appeal the ruling.

Assessing the Internet issue in public libraries, The New York Times wrote Nov. 25, "because public libraries provide free access to the Internet to those who may not have any other means of using it, they have been seen as a crucial site of the struggle over how the medium will be regulated. In the absence of any precedent, librarians and patrons

have cobbled together various compromises in an effort to strike a balance between providing access to the vast array of information on the Internet and protecting children from portions of it that may be harmful."

Brinkema's ruling was met with dismay by pro-family groups. "With the stroke of a pen, she has declared a new constitutional right to taxpayer-supported pornography, even to children," said Robert H. Knight, director of cultural studies with the Family Research Council in Washington.

Knight, in a Nov. 24 statement, argued "there is no 'right' to force libraries to accommodate any and all materials. If there were, the shelves would be full of hard-core magazines and videos. Libraries have always had the right to select materials, but the ACLU and its allies are intent on taking that away."

Knight also noted, "By striking down reasonable limits on Internet access at Loudoun County's libraries, Judge Brinkema has essentially opened up library users and staff to sexual harassment via pornography. If children are exposed, apparently that, too, is just too bad. If Judge Brinkema thinks that protecting children from hard-core porn is not a 'compelling government interest,' it is hard to imagine what could be."

Brinkema's ruling "shows that some liberal federal judges will jettison reason, logic, common sense and morality in order to destroy even minimal standards of decency in local communities," Knight said.

According to a 1998 survey by the American Library Association's office for information technology policy, 1,679 public libraries, or 14.6 percent of the nation's public libraries, use Internet filtering programs on some or all of their public Internet computer terminals, according to a pro-filtering organization, Filtering Facts.

The organization maintains an Internet site on filtering issues at www.filtering-facts.org.

In several reports, Judge Brinkema was noted as stating there are only "isolated incidents" in which porn surfers had posed problems in local libraries, but Filtering Facts founder David Burt, of Lake Oswego, Ore., said he has detailed more than 100 such incidents but was prevented from presenting his evidence because the judge made her ruling without holding a trial.

Dick Black, who authored the Loudoun County Internet policy when he was a library board member, explained the policy is more related to Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, which deals with hostile work environments, than the First Amendment.

The county policy states pornographic material displayed on library Internet terminals "would transform the library environment from one of reading and scholarship to one which invites unwelcome sexual advances and sexual harassment."

Black, currently a member of the Virginia House of Delegates, told Focus on the Family's Citizen Issues Alert Dec. 2 that federal cases have demonstrated that a Playboy calendar in a workplace cubicle can create a hostile work environment.

Citizen Issues Alert, meanwhile, quoted ACLU senior staff attorney Chris Hansen as stating, "Any library opposing any material on the Internet will have to think very hard whether this is acceptable in light of [Brinkema's] opinion."

However, The New York Times reported, an Orlando library official stated the Loudoun County decision will not prompt the removal of their Internet filters.

"We have exercised our role as librarians to choose the material for our selection," Dorothy Field, director of the Orange County library system, told The Times.

"What happens in Loudoun County is not going to change anything here."

Internet training provides entree to new families

CLEWISTON, Fla. (BP) — First Church of Clewiston, Fla., is reaching people through the Internet, but not the way you might imagine.

People are coming to church to learn how to reap the benefits — while avoiding the dangers — of the Internet. More importantly, many who attend the eight-week "Internet for Families Seminar" are unchurched and are introduced to the gospel and the church's ministry.

The seminar uses a combination of teaching lectures, class discussion, PowerPoint presentations, on-line demonstrations, and take-home activities. Besides teaching e-mail, browsing, searching, downloading and updating, Internet for Families offers help in protecting oneself and one's family from the dangers of the Internet.

Ken Reaves, the church's pastor, wrote the materials and teaches the seminar. It was Reaves' associate, Terry Willett, who came up with the idea. "Our pastor is known as a computer guru. He has the unique mix of knowing ministry well and knowing computers well. I kept bugging him to teach a class on the Internet during our Discipleship Training time."

Reluctantly, Reaves agreed and the church placed a small ad in the local weekly paper. The day after the ad appeared, 22 people called the church office to sign up for the seminar. By the morning of the first session in January 1997, 44 had signed up. Sixty-four showed up for the first session. By week two, enrollment had reached 101, with an average attendance of 76.

The seminar helped open the church's ministry to the community. Unchurched parents brought their children to the church's music and Discipleship Training classes. One couple learned the youth were studying True Love Waits materials on teen sexual abstinence at the same time and brought their teenagers the next Wednesday. Some came early and visited the Wednesday night worship service, while others visited on Sunday. Still others have e-mailed Reaves, asking for prayer for themselves or for a friend. One family asked questions about what it means to become a Christian and join the church. Others expressed interest in Sunday School, the women's ministry, Vacation Bible School and the ongoing ministry to youth and children.

Seminar participants included parents with young children as well as senior adults. More than half were not members of the church. Most in the seminar had owned a computer less than a year, and over half for fewer than six months.

"The response far exceeded anything any of us expected," Reaves said, "especially for a town of less than 10,000." Because of its success, the church started a second seminar in April. This fall, they offered an Internet for Kids class.

"The tremendous response we've had to the seminar caught me off guard," Reaves said. "We've followed up on those who attended the first two seminars, and this fall we were better prepared to minister to those who attend."

"One of the reasons Internet for Families is for adults is because we spend a whole session talking very candidly about the dangers that the Internet poses to families," Reaves said. "We show them how to protect themselves and their families." Another session is devoted to protecting personal privacy and protecting equipment from viruses.

The Gospel is also included in the seminar. In the next-to-

last session, Reaves demonstrates how to use all the skills learned in the seminar by doing an on-line Bible study. The Bible study is on Romans 5:8. By the end of that hour, everyone in the room has heard the gospel in a non-threatening way. "We haven't had a single objection to what we've done."

Others have heard about the seminar and are interested in hosting seminars in their churches. He already has several churches ready to pilot the materials. He also was scheduled to lead instructional sessions in a number of associational and regional events this fall.

Internet for Families Seminar has provided First Church with another entry point into the church. "People who wouldn't normally come near a church are coming," Willett said. "Several now see our church as relevant, one which makes a difference in their everyday lives. Not only are Christians learning how to use their computers, but many non-Christians are getting exposed to the church and Christ. It's very exciting."

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Bibliocipher

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GHE IVXN PZHHLW FH
BGYBI YSEW TNBLH,
PHBPVCHO YSEW PBGE,
EWBE IH DBI MCVY WVY
IH VXTWE EV BCPYHN
HKHNI DBC.

LVGVPPSBP RVXN: PSJ

Clue: G = L

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Ephesians Two: Eight.